

# Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### "Be a Head and Not a Tail"

"ואתכם יהיו איש איש למטה איש ראש לבית אבתיו הוא" (א ד)

Harav Moshe Cheifetz, one of the *rabbanim* of Italy, explained:

In *Maseches Yoma* (22b), Chazal said: "A *parnas* is not appointed for the public unless there is a box of insects hanging behind him [= that there is a flaw in his family's lineage (*Rashi* *ibid*)], so that if he becomes conceited, they tell him, go back to your roots." A frivolous person who came from a prestigious lineage once offended a sage who came from a simple family, and insulted him about his lineage. Replied the sage: "And what is the offender so proud of? I am the beginning of my family's lineage, while he is the end of his family's prestigious lineage..."

Here the *passuk* says that indeed, as Chazal say, the *nesi'im* of the *matos* were not chosen from the prestigious families, but rather each one of them was the beginning of the *yichus*, "the head of his house".

Based on this, Harav Gershon Stern, the Rav of Marash-Lodash, explained our request when heating the head of a lamb on Rosh Hashanah night: "That we be the head and not the tail" (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 583 12), that we should merit to be the "head" of the lineage of our family, and not, *chalilah*, the "tail," the end of the lineage.

*Melech Machsheves* [Venice 5470]; *Yalkut Hagershuni - Klalim*, Vol. III introduction

### Mentioning Lineage In *Krias HaTorah*

"ויתילדו על משפחתם לבית אבתם" (א יח)

From the words of the *Midrash* on this *passuk*, Harav Hillel Lichtenstein of Kolomaya derived a reason for the custom to call the one having an *aliyah* by his name and his father's name (*Rema Orach Chaim* 139 3):

The *Midrash* says (*Yalkut Shimoni Bamidbar Remez* 684): "When Bnei

Yisrael received the Torah the nations of the world envied them...HaKadosh Baruch Hu closed their mouths and said to them: Bring your genealogy books...the way My children bring theirs - [as it says] '*vayisyaldul mishpechosam*.'" Because Yisrael were privileged to receive the Torah in the merit of their lineage, thus when they are called up to

the Torah, their lineage should be mentioned.

*Mikrei Dardaki*

### A Set Place in Shul

"וחנו בני ישראל איש על מחנהו ואיש על דגלו לצבאתם" (א נב)

Harav Yaakov Abuchatzzeira learned an important lesson about *tefillah* alluded to in this *passuk*:

Chazal attributed great importance to establishing a set place to *daven* in shul, and said (*Brachos* 6b): "Anyone who sets aside a place for his *tefillah*, the Elokim of Avraham will help him." This obligation is alluded to in this *passuk*: "*Vechanu Bnei Yisrael*", - when they engage in *tefillah*, "*ish al machaneihu*" - in the place where the Shechinah rests in the shul, "*v'ish al diglo*" - and each one in his set place.

*Pituchi Chotam*

### Three Signs on Shabbos

"איש על דגלו באת לבית אבתם יחנו בני ישראל" (ב ב)  
The *Yalkut Reuveni* on this *parashah* says that the letters Yud - Hei - Vav - Hei were illuminated on the cloud that was regularly over the center of the camp, over the *aron*. Throughout the week they would float intermittently over the four banners that camped on the four sides of the Mishkan, while on Shabbos they remained resting over the same banner from the beginning of Shabbos till the end.

Based on this, the *Yaavetz* explained what we say in the *zemer* of *Mah Yafis* on Friday night: "*Davar siman tov lecha bamann v'os vedegel, Sambatyon hamisgalgel*" meaning: Aside for the fact that on Shabbos the *mann* did not fall and the Sambatyon River rests from its turbulence, there is an additional sign of the Shabbos rest - that the name Ka-h rests on the same banner from the beginning of Shabbos to the end.

*Siddur Bais Yaakov*, P. 155

### Meva'er Emunim

Sources on the Great Importance of Answering Amen

### To Be Careful Not to Miss Out on a Single Amen

"ואתה הפקד את הלויים...והלויים יחנו סביב למשכן העדת ולא יהיה קצף על עדת בני ישראל" (א נ-ג)

Harav Yaakov Abuchatzzeira wrote:

"הלויים" is numerically equivalent to amen, and 'והלויים' with the connecting *vav*, shows us that the "amen" connects the Names of Havayah and Adnus [as they are numerically equivalent to amen.] HaKadosh Baruch Hu warns Moshe to warn Bnei Yisrael that they should be very cautious and alert about this matter, because many actions are carried out Above through answering amen, as through this the Names are connected, and the worlds are elevated and abundance is brought down.

The *passuk* repeats "*Vehaleviim yachanu saviv leMishkan Ha'eidus*" to compound one warning with another to those who answer amen, that they should be very careful not to miss out on a single amen. When they do this, even if a great decree hangs over them, it is annulled, and that is what it says: 'And there will not be *ketzef*, anger, in Adas Bnei Yisrael.' As Chazal say (*Shabbos* 119b): 'One who answers amen with all his might, the decree of seventy years is torn up.'

*Pituchi Chotam*

## kiddazT remohS minumE

The Rebbe Reb Meir of Amshinov would spend many hours reciting amen after *Birchos Hashachar* from people who davened in the many *minyanim* that took place in his *bais medrash* in Bayit Vegan. *Keser Meluchah* p. 311



*Birchos Hashachar*



Aloud



With kavanah



Bechavrusa

## Birchas Hamazon – Retzei (2)

## A Great and Holy Day

In the *nusach* of *Retzei* we emphasize “because the day of Shabbos is great and holy before You.” This emphasis expresses the fact that the essence of Shabbos is not that a person rests from the toil of the six other days, but rather a rest of holiness. The main obligation of a person on Shabbos is “*lekadesh*”, to sanctify the Shabbos day with peace of the soul, through using the free time to learn Torah. As the *Tur* cites (*Orach Chaim* 290) in the name of the *Midrash*: “The Torah said to HaKadosh Baruch Hu: Ribbono shel Olam, when Yisrael will enter the land, this one will run to his vineyard and this one will run to his field. What will be with me? Hashem said to the Torah: I have a match that I am matching up to you, and that is Shabbos, as they will not be doing their work then and will be able to be busy with you.” The *Tur* writes: “Therefore, it is necessary to set a time to learn Torah [on Shabbos], to tell the nation the laws of Hashem and His Torah.”

The Bais Yosef there adds in the name of the *Midrash (Tanchuma Vayakhel)*: “HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe: Go down and make for me big gatherings on Shabbos so that all the generations that come after you will learn together in communities each Shabbos, and will enter the shuls and *batei Midrash* to learn Torah in public...HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael: If you gather each and every Shabbos in the shuls and *batei medrash* and read in the Torah and in *Neviim*, I consider it as though you coronated Me in My world.”

From the words of *Chazal* we learn that the Torah is the partner of Shabbos, and without Torah, Shabbos is considered only half an entity. Therefore, it was established in the passage of *Retzei* to say: “Because this day is great and holy before You” – Shabbos is “*gadol*” and perfect, only when it is “*lefanecha*”, before You. How is this? *Lishbos bo*, to rest on this day, *kemitzvas retzonecha* – as You commanded us, to rest from our work on the one hand and to engage in Torah on the other hand. (*Lehoros Nossan* [Harav Nossan Gestetner] – *Moadim*, Vol. II, p. 48).

## The Understanding of a Peddler

The simple meaning of the phrase “*gadol vekadosh*”, great and holy, is “*gadol*” – that it has a lofty part that is within our ability to grasp, and “*kadosh*” – a part whose depth and essence is beyond our grasp. (Based on the *Malbim Yechezkel* 38:23)

The Chasam Sofer would offer a parable about a simple Jew, a peddler from a remote village, who visited St. Petersburg, the capital city. When he passed near the palace of the tsar and noticed the well tended gardens, he could not overcome his curiosity and sneaked inside without knowing it was the palace garden. As he walked through the pathways of the garden and marveled at the plants and flowers and the magnificent way they were arranged, the Russian Tsar suddenly appeared before him. The Tsar suppressed his hanger about the trespassing and began to question the Jew: “Who are you?”

“A Pole from a town in Poland,” replied the Jew.

“And what do you do?”

“I am a peddler,” the man replied. And then in the manner of Jews, he immediately countered, “And who are you sir?”

“My name is Nikolai,” the stunned Tsar replied.

“And what do you do?” the innocent Jew continued to ask.

“I am the Tsar of Russia,” the Tsar replied, finding it hard to believe how naïve the visitor was.

“A Tsar?!” the Jew replied, gazing and the green expanses around him. “I don’t know what that is, but I assume it’s a pretty good livelihood...”

The Chasam Sofer says that this is an illustration of what a simple villager was able to grasp about the great Tsar of Russia. And from here, *l’havdil alfei havdalos* – we can understand how little our understanding is about the greatness of the holy Shabbos. (*Ezri Me’im Hashem, Yisro*)

## “Yom Gadol” – Beginning with Shabbos Hagadol

Harav Zelig Reuven Bengis, the *av bais din* of Yerushalayim, cited in the name of the commentaries, that the Shabbos before Pesach is called Shabbos Hagadol, because from this Shabbos and on, everyone recognized the greatness of Shabbos over the other six days. From that day on as well, all Shabbosas are called “*Yom Gadol*”, as we say in *Retzei*.

Harav Bengis explained: Until *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, it was widely and mistakenly believed that the power of the six days of the week was greater than the power of Shabbos, because it was during that time that Hashem created all the creatures of the world, while on Shabbos He rested and didn’t create anything. But on the Shabbos prior to *Yetzias Mitzrayim* they all understood the greatness of Shabbos, because from that Shabbos on, to this very day, there hasn’t been a single new creation. All the creations are descended from those created in the first Six Days. From Shabbos and on, HaKadosh Baruch Hu has been running the world Himself, with absolute control over nature, as everyone witnessed during *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, when all rules of nature were overturned. This control, which is beyond all the powers of creation, is encapsulated in the day of Shabbos. Therefore, Shabbos is called a “*Yom Gadol Vekadosh*”. (*Liflagos Reuven – Aggadah*, Vol. II, *Drush* 10 p. 141)

## “Yom Gadol” Beyond Measure

Another explanation for the praise of “*gadol vekadosh*” is brought by Harav Yechezkel Shraga Lifschitz Halberstam of Stropkov: The special *segulah* of Shabbos is that a person can add to it by bringing it in early, and can extend its departure as much as he wants, and this addition is sanctified as Shabbos. That is what we say “*Ki zeh yom gadol vekadosh*” – it can be larger and longer, and holier, than its regular measure, if we make sure “*lishbos bo velanuach bo b’ahavah*” – to add to it, not because we are obligated to do so, but because of our love of Hashem. (*Divrei Yissachar Dov* p. 164)

## Shabbos Zemiro that Resurrected the Dead

The record keepers are disputed over the identity of the author of the beautiful *zemer* “*Mah Yafis Umah Na’am*” that is sung among many communities during the *seudah* of Shabbos day. According to one opinion, it was authored by Harav Mordechai Yaffeh, ז”ל, the Baal Halevushim. The Maggid Harav Yoshe the *shochet ubodek* of Brisk related the story behind the composition of this very moving *piyut*:

When Rav Mordechai Yaffeh was the Av Bais Din in Horodna, he had an only son, who grew in a prodigious lad, an erudite Torah scholar. Everyone predicted greatness for him, and his father loved him very deeply. One Erev Shabbos as the youth was making his way to his parents’ house, and was already very close to Horodna, a band of robbers and hoodlums accosted him. After they took the bit of money that he had, they killed him and threw his body on the wayside.

At the time, the family knew nothing yet about the fate of their beloved son, and because no one was asking about the dead body, as was the law at the time, the mayor of Horodna, the nearby town, had to take responsibility for the incident. He traveled to the site of the murder, claimed the body and instructed that it be placed in a room that he had rented in a hotel near the murder site until it would be decided what to do with it.

The policemen took the body of the victim and put it on the floor in the hotel room. The door was locked, and the police left to begin investigating the murder and to track down the perpetrators to bring them to justice. About an hour before Shabbos, in a remarkable way, the bitter news reached the young man’s great father. It was late and there was nothing he could do but wait until Shabbos was over. During this difficult time, as his son lay lifeless and he was overcome with a deep feeling of anguish, he focused on just one thing: How could he accept Shabbos properly, with *simchah* and not sadness.

The righteous father used the hour that was left until Shabbos to accept the decree of Heaven with love and joy. He did not, *chalilah*, ignore the tremendous grief over the loss of his son, but tried as best he could to put the thoughts aside until after Shabbos, so that this Shabbos, as well, he could fulfill the mitzvah of rejoicing on Shabbos, as is the *halachah*.

This was extremely difficult for him, but he made every effort until finally, almost of itself, a *zemer* burst forth from the depths of his heart, “*Mah yafis umah na’am ahavah besa’anugim, es Shabbos mesos nogim...*”

And he composed this lofty *zemer*, which in time, became commonly sung across Klal Yisrael. From line to line, the love and joy of Shabbos became strengthened in the heart of the pious father, and the searing pain in his heart receded, and was replaced with pure *emunah* in the Creator, Who commanded us to rejoice on Shabbos and to accept decrees with love. By the time the father reached the end of the wondrous song, his thoughts were completely focused on his *ahavah Hashem*. He no longer felt the angst and the pain.

Meanwhile, in the Upper Worlds, a great tumult was occurring. The Heavenly Angels observed from Above how a human being was able to overcome his

tremendous and unfathomable pain, and to suppress his feelings in order to fulfill the mitzvah of Hashem to rest on Shabbos with great joy.

When the *tzaddik* came to the stanza where he emotionally asks: “*Chai zakuf mach lekori, Shimcha Shema elyon v’al techerash larash v’evyon, vekabel niv vegam higayon...*” the entire Heavenly Entourage agreed that the murdered son must be resurrected. And this is how the miracle occurred:

The soul of the son returned to his body and he awoke, as though from a dream. He stood up and looked around in confusion. Slowly, he remembered everything that had happened to him over the previous few hours. It was the middle of Friday night, and the youth wanted to return home to his family, which was certainly worrying about him. The door of the room was locked, and he debated what to do. Should he knock at the door and ask the proprietor to let him out? He surely would not agree, because he was afraid he would be punished by the mayor, who would not believe his story. Perhaps the proprietor would even kill him out of panic and disbelief that he had come to life again.

He had no choice, therefore, but to climb on the high window, to push through the bars and flee from the place through the nearby forest.

It was outside of the *techum Shabbos*, and thus the boy decided to pass Shabbos in the forest. Immediately on Motzai Shabbos, he ran to the city, to his father’s house.

As he was running to his father’s house, his father was finishing to recite *Havdalah*. Until that moment, his face was glowing with the joy of Shabbos. But then, his expression began to change. The pain he had suppressed all Shabbos suddenly clouded his face and he began to sob bitterly over his loss.

The father had already taken off his shoes to sit down to *shivah* when suddenly the door opened – and there was his son. Reb Mordechai Yaffeh could not believe his eyes. At first he thought it was a vision, a figment of his imagination. But the boy hurried to explain: “Indeed, Father, I was in the Heavenly worlds. I stood before the Heavenly Court. Suddenly, your song broke through and began to resonate in the Heavenly Court.

“Your efforts to capture your pain for the honor of Shabbos and for the Creator Who commanded us to rejoice, aroused compassion in the Heavenly Spheres. The Voice emerged from the Heavenly Court and instructed that I be returned to this world.”

Meanwhile, the mayor heard about the disappearance of the body, but the guard had no explanation for how it had happened. Before taking the guard to task, the mayor decided to go to the home of the victim’s parents to clarify things. He was astonished to discover the boy sitting and chatting with his parents.

When the mayor heard the story about the miracle, he asked to write down the words of the song, and from that day on, the words of *Mah Yafis* became famous among all in the town, Jew and non-Jew alike.

*Kisvei Rabi Yoshe Shochet Ubodek*, p. 138